

1. The Flower that Raises Dead

In English - rose mallow, chinese hibiscus, China rose, Hawai'ian hibiscus, rose of China, shoe black, or shoe flower; in Burmese - Khaung Yann Pan (ခေါင်ရန်းပန်း¹); in Latin - *Hibiscus chinensis* or *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*. Old Myanmar people called it "funeral flower" (သေချိုင်းပန်း [thingyaing pann]) and believed that it can raise dead. Not for long, though.

If you had a relative who just passed away, you'd keep him at home for a few days, which is a custom in both Sri Lanka and Myanmar. This was originally explained as an opportunity to practice *maranassati* (the meditation on death), but obviously it just increases attachment on the dead person (please, do not believe the fairy tale that ordinary people reflect on truth of death when their beloved relative passes away. I saw and heard the crying myself, when in Sri Lanka. In Burma they reveal it even in a proverb). After a few days monks are invited to chant Pāḷi and give a short Dhamma discourse on impermanence. The crying, weeping, desperate relatives remove the coffin with the dead one from their house when the monks arrive. Later the coffin is brought to the crematorium or to the cemetery.

There is a story of old, that if you decorate the body with rose mallow (e.g. fix it in the dead person's hair), the dead person will get up and themselves go and walk, move and travel, journeying right to the cemetery – where they just lie dead for good. It is not assumed any more.

Because of this, rose mallow is never used by Burmese ladies when they decorate their hair with flowers. It is also never exhibited in festivals and parades. However, it may be used in gardens – and I have seen a number of them in the Dhammasahāya Center of the ven. Dr. Nandamālābhivaṃsa, in Pyin Oo Lwin.



Rose mallow – the flower fully opens in the morning sun.



Rose mallow – opening of the flower.

¹ Burmese people often misspell it as ခေါင်ရမ်းပန်း.

2. The Nests of Mandalay's *Pariyatti*

There are three main centers of *pariyatti*, Dhamma education, in Mandalay: (1) Mya Daung, (2) Shwe Gyin Taik Ma Gyi, and (3) Visuddhayone. There is no connection between Mya Daun and Shwe Gyin, no connection between Mya Daung and Visuddhayone. Shwe Gyin Sayadaw and U Visuddha were teacher and disciple. (All of this information was kindly shared to me by ven. Vajirapāṇī).

(1) Mya Daung Kyaung was built by Mya Daung queen during king Mindon, and a famous monk who studied there is Sayadaw U Sāsanābhivamsa, who passed away maybe five or six months ago. **Mya Daung Kyaung belongs to Suddhamma Nikāya.**

(2) In Mandalay Shwe Gyin Taik Ma Gyi is at the foot of Mandalay Hill. Shwe Gyin Taik Ma Gyi was also built during king Min Don, and the name comes according the Shwe Gyin Sayadaw whose name is such because of the village where he was born. **Shwe Gyin Taik Ma Gyi is the first monastery of Shwe Gyin Sayadaw as well as of the Shwe Gyin Nikāya.**

(3) Shwe Gyin Sayadaw's disciple U Visuddha built Visuddhayone. First Visuddhayone was built in Ashepyin Mandalay (called "Mahāvisuddhārāma", in the corner of streets '62' and '24'). Later was built its branch in Anaukpyin Mandalay (called "Taik Thit" (= "new building"), in the corner of streets '36' and '87'). **All Visuddhayone monasteries belong to Shwe Gyin Nikāya.**

3. The Grand Enigma – Grave of the ven. Mahā Kassapa

- In Mon Ywa, Kani Township (ကနီမြို့နယ်), it is a big area with Alaungkaw Kassapa's Cave, around 60 miles far from the Nyaung Pin Gyi Harbor (which is on a shore of Mon Ywa Town).

- In 2009, 9th of February the place miraculously opened and since every Dabodwe's full-moon day there is festival of offering lamps to the Alaungkaw Kassapa.

- It is possible to get there on elephant or on feet. It's good to take snacks and water, but there are shops where necessary refreshment can be purchased.

- Some historical books claim, that the Alaungkaw Kassapa actually didn't burn his body. He lied down keeping his body as a piece of gold, waiting until he will be cremated by the next Buddha, i.e. Buddha Metteyya. Ven. Tiloka explained to Ma Kay Thi that the Alaungkaw Kassapa is truly the ven. Mahā Kassapa of our Pali Scriptures. In a previous life of his he has buried a bird within a three-piece oven (oven made of three bricks/stones/water-pots on which a pot/pan is put and people cook in it). As a result of this action his body after his final passing away (*Parinibbāna*) was fixed among the three hills - Vebhu (ဝေဘူတောင်), Vebhāra (ဝေဘရတောင်), and Sunandara (သုနန္ဒရတောင်) and with the coming of the next Buddha - Buddha Ariyametteyya, the body of ven. Mahā Kassapa will be cremated by the Buddha Himself (or the body will ignite itself).

- Ma Kay Thi has heard a story, that some time ago a novice with his lay helper entered the cave. It is said, that they made an Act of Truth (prayer on behalf of a religious fact) to learn where is the venerable's body.

Then, because it appeared in their dream that they should follow a stream that flows beside the cave, they followed the stream - thus they entered the hill and saw there the body of the venerable completely covered in pure gold. They also saw perfumes and flowers offered at the body. They also saw gold coins, necklaces, golden pitchers, and small heaps of stones, metal, and rubies. Then the novice and his helper paid their obeisance and offerings to the venerable. When going back, because the novice didn't have any greed or craving for the precious stones, metal, or the rubies, he could easily leave from the cave. However, his helper, greedy for the treasure, was not able to (find the) escape. Today, although there is the stream that the novice and his helper found before, it doesn't lead to an entrance of the cave any more. That is because ချောင်းရေဟာ တောင်ခြေရင်းမှာ တပြေးညီ ပုံစံအတိုင်း စီးဝင်နေလို့ပါတဲ့။

- The original donor of the place is king Ajātasattu, believe some. However, according to the palm-leaf manuscripts, Alaungdaw Kassapa Mahāthera passed away to Parinibbana in 793 AC (154 ME) at the age of 120 years, 50 vassa (years of monkhood). King Ajātasattu lived in 5th century BC, so it would not be possible to donate a place to stay for Alaungdaw Kassapa who lived in 8th century AC, twelve or thirteen centuries after king Ajatasattu died.

- There is also a Buddha's footprint in the area.

- A number of people who offer money at the Alaungdaw Kassapa area, if they do chanting and Buddhist religious rituals wishing to have that money back, surprisingly find out that they have their money back.

- Near the stream called "Pahtoe Lone Chaung" (ပုထိုးလုံးချောင်း) there is another stream called "alms-bowl washing stream", which is believed to be a stream where ven. Mahā Kassapa (if we believe that the Mahā Kassapa from 5th century BC was the monk here) washed his bowl. (But it could be also the stream where the Alaungdaw Kassapa, a monk who lived many centuries after ven. Mahā Kassapa, washed his bowl here.) Until today there are stones that resemble lumps of rice.

- Descend four miles far from the Phayar Wa Sakhan (ဘုရားဝေခန်း, "the resort of [Fat Buddha / Buddha's Entrance]") and see a flat stone there. On the stone itself there are until today marks of the ven. Mahā Kassapa's double-robe which he dried on this stone - namely the stitches and squares made by the robe's stitches.

- Before you arrive to the area of Alaungdaw Kassapa, there are male and female crows near a big water-stream. A number of visitor have claimed that this couple of crows showed them the right way to go.

links:

- a) <http://fullmoontravelsmyanmar.weebly.com/41024156414641454102414041004153412141574147412341574141414541264140414541164123414041244121415341524106423441164153.html>
- b) http://amayeainn.blogspot.com/2009/02/blog-post_18.html

Alaungdaw Kassapa

(Ma Kay Thi Hlaing's notes from the book "Interesting things about the body of ven. Mahā Kassapa" ["အလောင်းတော်ရှင်မဟာကဿပ အကြောင်း သိကောင်းစရာ"], U Phoo (Chief, Distributor) [ဦးဖူး (ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ) (ဖြန့်ဝေသူ)]; Shweyinmar Saponehnate Taik [ရွှေယင်းမာ စာပုံနှိပ်တိုက်]; Yinmapin Town [ယင်းမာပင်မြို့]; [year of publication unknown]; notes translated and edited by monk Sarana (Czech).)

Location: Sagaing Division, Monywa Region, Kanni (ကန္နီ) Township.

The place of the Ashin Mahākassapa hill is ca. 50 miles far from the Pho-Win-Taung (ဖိုဝင်းတောင် {or rather ဖိုလ်ဝင်းတောင်}), but the path is continuous, hence the travel can be accomplished within a single day. There are pagodas with the relics of the Buddha and Buddha's images in the site.

The story of a previous life of the Mahā Kassapa goes, that there was a monk and his student-novice. The novice killed ("beat") a crow when the teacher was out on a trip, and then when the novice saw his teacher coming back, he hid the crow covering and pressing it inside a cooking (iron) tripod. Because of that, ven. Mahā Kassapa attained *Parinibbāna* inside a cave surrounded by three hills, namely Vebhula (ဝေဘူလတောင်), Vebhāra (ဝေဘာရတောင်), and Gijjhakūṭa/Sunandara (ဂိဇ္ဈကုဋ် (သုနန္ဒရ)တောင်). In the future, the Buddha Ariya Metteyya is supposed to take the body of Alaungtaw Kassapa on His palm and cremate him by the fire element.

Nine Wonders

1. The cave is connected to and forming bridge to all of the three hills, namely Vebhula, Vebhāra and Sunandara.
2. Inside the cave there are artistic motives same as those of woodcarvers and masons, however these appeared naturally.
3. The water of the well on the top of Vebhula Hill is imbued with loving-kindness (mettā) of the noble venerable [i.e. ven. Mahā Kassapa], hence many people come and take away this water to their homes, because it cures sicknesses and pain.
4. When there are made offerings on plates (crocery) and then let drift on the water {details unknown}, the plates then return without the offerings. This was interpreted by people of old as that the deities of the place who protect the Buddha's teachings keep what was offered.
5. No living beings cross over (upon) the cave.
6. Even though there are many people roaming in these great forests, hills, and streams, there has been encountered no danger of wild animals or robbers.
7. Those who are coming with bad intentions, plotting evil, these hear scary tiger-roars made by the local deities; and those who come with good conduct in the body, speech, and mind, these are protected by the deities.

8. There are still clear lines and squares (lines/scratches) at the place where the noble venerable dried his robes.

9. This place is equally distant from the villages of east, west, south, and north.(?) The morality and concentration of the people who come to meditate in these places are examined [perhaps by the deities]. Those who are accomplished are protected by the deities.

When ven. Mahā Kassapa became a merchant in Bārānasī Country and when his younger and elder brother, these three, enjoyed *jhānas* and psychic powers, the Gotama Buddha-to-be, their eldest brother, declared/predicted - "I will become the Gotama Buddha. My middle-younger-brother Kassapa will become an Arahant in my Dispensation. The Arahant Kassapa will then pay off the consequences of his previous kamma having attained Parinibbāna under the Vebhula, Vebhāra, and Sunandara hills. The little-younger-brother Metteyya, when he becomes a Buddha, he will place (ven. Mahā Kassapa) on his palm, give a Dhamma discourse to people, deities, Brahmas, and (other) beings, and cremate him (the ven. Mahā Kassapa) by the element of fire.

Life of ven. Mahā Kassapa

Ven. Mahā Kassapa was born in Mahātitta Village of Magadha Region as a son of a Brahmin who was rich with eight hundred million (= "eighty crores"). Because this son (named) the youngster Pippali descended down from the (above-heavenly) world of Brahmas {which is characteristic by absence of any sensual & sexual pleasures, abundant exclusively in meditation pleasures}, he didn't have a need for a wife. However, because his parents wished otherwise, he made a statue of gold and asked Brahmins to search a lady similar to the statue. In Maddarāja Division, in the Sagala Town he found the lady Bhadda, whom he asked for marriage. When they were together, they lived *Brahmacariya* (i.e. no sex at all), even placing flowers between themselves when they were lying on the bed, saying that the flowers should wither if lust arises in any of the two. At one time they saw birds how they peck out insects in the field, and thus the spiritual need for liberation of birth and death (*samvega*) arose in them. They shaved one another, abandoned all what they had and entered a jungle. The World-Cycle of Ten-Thousand (or ten-thousand world-cycles) rumbled violently and cracked during a big earthquake, and the Sakka, the king of gods, together with (other) gods applauded.

The Buddha, when He saw the great shaking of the earth by His divine eye, realized that the youngster Pippali with the lady Bhadda are coming to become ordained. The Buddha then, by his (supernatural) power appeared on a throne (*pallanka*) under the Bahupattaka banyan tree, between the Rājagaha Country and Nālandā Town, shining powerfully with six rays of colors, waiting for the "great elder" ("*Mahāthera*" ?!) Pippali. The youngster Pippali and the lady Bhadda separated at a crossroads, Pippali going right, Bhadda going left. The Buddha ordained the youngster Pippali and with reference to his (Pippali's) lineage, the Buddha gave him (to the new monk Pippali) the name Kassapa. The Buddha taught the great elder (?!) ven. Mahā Kassapa the thirteen ascetic practices, through which mastery the great elder later became an eminent disciple of the Buddha.

At the great brightness of sunrise, on Tuesday, in the full-moon-day of Kason month, in the year 148 of the Great Myanmar Era, lying on a royal bedstead spread by Malla royal family in the park of sal trees (*Shorea robusta*) in Kusinārā Country, the Buddha arose from the fourth *jhāna* and thoroughly extinguishing all conditioned formations without remainder, "entered and enjoyed" the noble Nibbāna of the "great" unconditioned element. Even though there were attempts to burn the Buddha's body for seven days, it didn't ignite until the ven. Mahā Kassapa came and paid his respects, at which occasion the Buddha's body ignited itself. Also because of this, the deities, people, and Brahmas have great respect for ven. Mahā Kassapa.

After the Buddha passed away, when ven. Mahā Kassapa heard monks saying they will do whatever they want - now when the Buddha's passed away - worrying that the Buddha's dispensation may perish, he decided to arrange a Buddhist Council. In the year 148 of the Great Myanmar Era there was held the First Buddhist Council in the Sattapaṇṇi Cave of Vebhāra Hill-Range in Rājagaha City by five-hundred Arahants led by ven. Mahā Kassapa.

Ven. Mahā Kassapa and the king Ajātasattu decided to enshrine the Buddha's relics in caskets and chambers made of gold, silver, and rubies, so that they withstand the dangers of future, making a determination that the places of enshrining these relics will not stop scenting. By his (of ven. Mahā Kassapa) psychic powers he could see that these will be later dug up by the king Asoka, and made a declaration (prediction) of this, which was then inscribed on golden desks.

The *Parinibbāna* of the noble venerable

Then the noble venerable, searching where is he going to attain *Parinibbāna*, he saw the results of his past actions and not telling anybody, gradually came from Maṇipūra Āsaṃ Country (မာဏိပူရ အာသံပြည်) to the northern part of Myanmar Country crossing numerous forests, hills, and streams. In the Hnin Kyi Village (နှင်းကြီးရွာ) on the western bank of the Chindwin River (ချင်းတွင်းမြစ်) he met with the hill-man U Kaung Sin, and accepted his respectfully offered hard and soft food. U Kaung Sin showed ven. Mahā Kassapa the way, and ven. Mahā Kassapa continued until he arrived in a small village, where he accepted meal from lay men and lay women, wrapped in leaves and offered. Thus the village is called "Leaf-Wrapping Village" (ဖက်လုပ်ရွာ) until today. Travelling further, ven. Mahā Kassapa arrived in the Kanni Township (ကန်နီမြို့နယ်), at a little water-stream near the "fat Buddha" ("Buddha's entrance") (ဘုရားဝ) where he had his meal. While he was washing his bowl, lumps of rice fell in the water and there formed white stones resembling lumps of rice. Because of that the stream is called "Bowl-Washing Stream" (သပိတ်ဆေးချောင်း) until today. Travelling even further, the Sakka, king of god, together with Mātali deities unable to stay any more - descended to the place where Vebhula, Vebhāra, and Gijjhakūṭa hills meet, and conjured a perfumed chamber for the noble venerable to stay in, building a jeweled royal couch with tiered roof, conjuring and decorating (the place) by perfume-sticks/columns, bunches of golden and silver flowers, and arranged gems of various kinds. The noble venerable made determination: "Before I attain *Parinibbāna*, may my body be completely gelded, and unable to be cremated by people, deities, or

Brahmās. May the Buddha Ariya-Metteyya take it on His hand and cremate it by the element of fire. The people and monks who come to pay respect, may their wealth, possession, gems, higher positions increase day by day, and staying satisfied, may they be able to strive and practice the Dhamma that leads out of the Samsāra (Cycle of Rebirth)."

The three hills that meet and blend at the place where the noble venerable attained *Parinibbāna*, became a natural bridge, under which is visible a flowing stream of water.

Ajātasattu searching the noble venerable

When the king Ajātasattu search the noble venerable, he could not find him. A number of ministers travelled on horses from Maṇipūra Āsaṃ Country until the northern part of Myanmar, directly to the Chindwin River. When they met with U Kaun Sin at the western bank of Chindwin, in the Hnin Kyi Village, he showed them the way by which the noble venerable went. Thanks to the marks of the venerable's robe on the stone-slab, they knew they are on the right way. Later, crossing a number of streams, the royal horse (of king Ajātasattu) died because of a heart attack(?) ("pined away"). King Ajātasattu removed the reins of the king and made asseveration of truth that if they (king Ajātasattu with his ministers) are going to see the ven. Mahā Kassapa, these reins will change into stone. They became stone, and because of that the stream nearby was called "Horse's Reins ("Nape-Pile") Stream". And the king Ajātasattu, gaining energy thinking he will meet with the noble venerable, continued until the hill-range of Vebhāra. There he thrust his spear in the ground and made determination: "If it is true that my teacher great elder Kassapa attained Parinibbāna here, (and) if it is true that (I) am going to respectfully visit the body of the noble venerable, by screwing and stirring in the surface of the earth, may there ("simply") appear a strange mark (leading us to the noble venerable)." At that moment waters sprang up in a fountain and flew toward the place where was the (venerable's) body. The king followed the stream and joyfully saw the (venerable's) body on the jeweled royal couch, entirely gelded.

As this is the cave conjured by Sakka, the king of gods, the tiered roof has around 35 feet (in height), the gelded body of the noble venerable on the jeweled royal couch is decorated by various jeweled ornaments, and in the four corners (of the cave) there are alighted, shining (four) columns - of diamond, emerald, ruby, and silver. It is possible to see that the fire is still not extinguished. (People) have also seen how deities and Brahmas pay respect (there).

Because the king Ajātasattu had immense respect toward the noble venerable, by his powerful intention and joy similar to ဆီထိဝွင်း (?), by the pure faith, he offered gems, gold, silver, diamonds, and rubies for building of a monastic building for the Buddha Ariya-Metteyya where (the Buddha Ariya Metteyya) may cremate the noble venerable. The king also new the determination of the noble venerable. Worrying that bad people may steal and destroy (the place), he implored the gods who protect the Dispensation and other gods that they close the door - and the stone door there themselves closed. The water-well at the place where Ajātasattu thrust his spear and made the asseveration of truth, which is in the lower part of earth-surface where are rest-houses inhabited by people, is called "The Truth Well" (သစ္စာရေဝွင်း). It is a little well, where people take water for drinking and other use, but the water is never used up.

Stories from the place that happened later

A) Once there was a monk and a novice - teacher and a disciple - in Kapain-Thi-Kone Village (ကပိုင်သီးကုန်းရွာ) of Yin-Mar-Pin Town (ယင်းမာပင်မြို့) in Monywa Region (မုံရွာခရိုင်). When the teacher and disciple went to pay their respect to the lord, the sayadaw (the monk) told the novice: "When you see the gold, silver, and gems, do not have greed for them." After they entered, there arose greed-thoughts in the mind of the monk, and thus he could not escape and was trapped there for life. The young novice who was scared of (the bad) told by generations of teachers, not acquainted with infatuation, was expelled in a crooked (zigzagged) way by the local deities, and the hole by which he escaped is called "Little-Novice's Hole" (ရှင်သူငယ်ပေါက်) until today.

B) In 1297 ME three monks went to pay respects at the body of the lord Kassapa. They left from Yinmarpin Town and slept one night in the monastery of Thikone Village (owned by Bambo Grove တာဝတ (?)) of Kyun Taw (ကျွန်းတော) in Kone Ywa (ကုန်းရွာ). Then, travelling further by the forest path, they arrived in the Pwint Kyi Camp (ပွင့်ကြီးစခန်း). There is a well two cubits in diameter and a cubit and a hand-span in depth. There is not overflowing much water; and it is said that even though there is a little of water, one hundred, two hundred, three hundred people use it and the water is not depleted. The monks didn't believe that, and splashing the water from the well, when the water was just going to be used up, they saw an abundant stream of water just flowing in {the text doesn't contain more information}.

C) Generations of old say that there is a couple of male and female crows on a tree near the resthouse, who show the right way to the pilgrims.

D) Body of Ven. Sucetī Vija (ရှင်သုစေတီဝိဇ္ဇာအလောင်း), a monk (mentioned) in a writing on a resthouse - That monk wanted to see the body of the lord Kassapa and made the determination that he will not return until he himself visits the ven. Kassapa's body. Every day he went near the cave where the pagoda(?) is built and making determination (this way), after over a year, when he concentrated on Dhamma and made determination, the stone-door opened. Next year the bronze door, then the silver door, (upon which) he saw the gelded body of ven. Kassapa on the golden royal couch. When the monk asked "Is it possible to follow after the noble venerable and respectfully meet (you)?", he got the answer and explanation: "It is not possible to meet. If you want offering, it is possible to give (you) money." The monk was 40 years old, with a respectable appearance. After another year when the pilgrims were asked, they said they have not met the venerable (any more). {This seems open to any conclusion - the monk may have got money and left; he may have been trapped in the cave if he had greed for the money; he may have refused and left. The text does not answer this.}

E) In 1340, a lady from Ote-Pho Town (အုတ်ဖိုမြို့) came to (see) the lord Kassapa. On the sandy area near the stone door at the entrance to the cave-corridor, making determination, she said: "Noble venerable, I offer half a Kyat (50 cents). Please, compassionately give me a quarter of a Kyat (25 cents). {I suppose she dug the sand and placed the half-a-Kyat there.} Not long after that, she raked by hands in the sand and unable to find the offered half-a-Kyat (50 cents), she found a-quarter-of-a-Kyat (25 cents). It is therefore surmised that the half-a-Kyat was taken by the deities.

F) A lady of ca. 50 years of age from Bhokalay Town (ဘိုကလေးမြို့) came to the entrance of the cave of the (ven. Kassapa's) body taking 5 Kyats (with her). She descended to the cave under the pagoda and raking the sand there, she deposited three Kyats inside. In the same way she deposited there also two Kyats. "I offer three Kyats to the noble venerable. As for the two Kyats, I will offer them to the sayadaw responsible (for this site)," was her determination. Not long after that, when she raked the sand, she looked there and got back only the two Kyats. She offered each of the two responsible sayadaws two Kyats.

There is a collection of found writings published by Mt. Popa Sayadaw U Kavinda (ပုပ္ဖိန္ဒတောင်ဆရာတော် ဦး ကဝိန္ဒ) which contains (an account called) "The Old History of Kassapa" (ကဿပသမိုင်းဟောင်း), where are explained the past lives of ven. Mahā Kassapa and a noteworthy detailed account on the history of the body of ven. Kassapa, including (the text of) parabaiks, available for reading.

May all beings be happy,

Monk Sarana